



Ex-CBI Roundup

— CHINA — BURMA — INDIA —

[ISSN 0014-388X]

October, 2000





THE GEN. STILWELL STAMP
Courtesy Ralph Gould Jr.

Slidell, Alabama?

• RE: May 2000 issue - story on page 12 "The 886th Signal Co. Depot AVN by David S. Rotbart.

In second paragraph he reports training in swamps of Slidell, Alabama, across Lake Ponchartrain. He must have spent too much time on Bourbon St. in New Orleans if he didn't realize that Slidell is in Louisiana and not Alabama.

Enjoy reading every word of the Roundup and then forward it on to my grandson who is now in the military. Whenever he visits he digs out my old copies and reads and re-reads them.

Thank you very much for the good stories and hope the stories continue coming in to you for a long, long time.

W. H. "HAM" STEVENS,
251 N. Davis St.,
Forest, MS 39074-3551

About A-36

• In the last several issues of the Ex-CBI Roundup, there has been several articles referring to the B-51. This airplane was an A-36 - it was the original P-51 with the Allison engine and was equipped with dive bombing brakes. There were a few used in CBI but I understand most were used in Italy. They were trying to copy the tactics used by the German JU-87 stuka dive bomber.

I graduated in February 1943 from single engine flying school at Eagle Pass, TX. We had a choice of five different places to go, different types of airplanes. I chose ATC. As far as I know everybody got their first choice. The A-36 choice was the THIRD Air Force, 48th Bomb Group, Key Field, MS, which was

located at Meridian, MS.

According to the Aluminum Trail there were four pilots killed in CBI flying A-36s. On page 38, Oct 16, 1943, Lt. Bowman and Lt. Morgan. On page 68, Dec 3, 1943 Lt. Lowell and on page 176, June 28 1944, Lt. Patterson.

In my graduating class there were four pilots killed flying the Hump, all in C-46s. One killed flying a P-40 and one killed flying a P-51 in CBI according to the Aluminum Trail.

WILLIAM B. KOCH,
345 Co. Rd 1942,
Yantis, TX 75497

Recall This One?

• Actual date not available. Sometime in July/August 1944 while biking across the rice paddies, heading for Lingling air base, two B-25s flew over heading north (Hengyeng?). In what seemed to be a short time, one returned, apparently on one engine judging by the engine sound.

On arriving at Lingling, I was told that one of the B-25s was lost over the target area. The second B-25 landed at Lingling with a wounded crew member.

Maybe one of our Air Corps readers is familiar with the incident and can provide a detailed story.

D. M. COOK,
210 Echo Drive,
Chambersburg, PA
17201-3309

**Roundup
Back Issues
Are Available!**

EX-CBI ROUNDUP

EX-CBI ROUNDUP

CHINA • BURMA • INDIA

(ISSN 0014-388X)

Ex-CBI ROUNDUP, established in 1946, is a reminiscing magazine published monthly except AUGUST and SEPTEMBER, at 1800 Park Newport, #203, Newport Beach, CA 92660, by and for former members of U.S. Units in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II.

DWIGHT O. KING Editor

PERIODICALS postage paid at Laurens, Iowa

Vol. 55, No. 8

October, 2000

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

\$17.00 Per Year

Foreign \$20.00 Per Year

Postmaster: Please Report Address Changes Immediately to EX-CBI ROUNDUP

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BUSINESS OFFICE

PO Box 2665, La Habra, CA 90631

562-691-2848

EDITORIAL, PHOTOS & STORIES OFFICE

1800 Park Newport, #203

Newport Beach, CA 92660 • 949-759-3553

Letter FROM The Editor

• **Seems like a short time ago** we were looking forward to the year 2000, and wondering about the possible Y2K crisis that never happened. Well, now we are in the last three months of the year. Where does time go?

• **As we start our fall series of magazines** we believe we have several great CBI stories to fill our fall issues. Hope you'll agree as we print in our 55th year.

• **On September 8th**, your editor along with some 600 B-29 flyers and guests, had the honor of dedicating a 20 ft. wing span replica of a B-29 aircraft on the grounds of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. The bronze monument was presented by the 20th Air Force Association and was accepted for the Academy by the Commanding General of the school. The event drew five active duty generals as well as a large contingent of the cadets. Music and a jet fly-over added to the ceremony. It was a great day!

• **This past summer** we saw the Gen. Stilwell stamp arrive. A long awaited tribute to a gallant soldier. A reproduction of the stamp can be found on page 2 of this issue.

• **This month's cover** shows airmen crowded into a C-87 somewhere over the Hump.

OCTOBER, 2000



886th Signal Co. Story

• Unlike any other periodicals I receive, I read the Ex-CBI Roundup cover to cover each month. Thanks for the memories . . . I want to compliment David S. Rotbart on his article about the 886th Signal Co. in the May 2000 issue. My deficiency in writing with that much detail is that I wandered around the world WW2 and did not write a note about anything. This was a huge mistake with my poor memory. So, thanks to you guys that are reminding me about what happened around me in the CBI.

TOM D. GRAVES,
2401 Barton Ave.,
Nashville, TN 37212

Allison Engines

• Enjoy reading the stories about the great Allison engine. Was a crew chief on P-38s in Northern and Central India. Was in the 33rd Fighter Group. Later transferred to the 4th Combat Cargo. Anyone out there from one of these outfits?

EDWARD SOUZA,
PO Box 540353,
Lake Worth, FL 33454



PHOTO IS OF T/SGT. MYERS holding two jackal pups, which were donated by a native. At the time they looked just like dog pups. At the first change was to their ears and then they lost their baby fat. In time they disappeared, whether in someone's soup or to the jungle. Mountain lions appeared at times but briefly, and an occasional Armadillo. Photo by Merrill Myers.

Third Air Depot

- There will be a reunion for the Third Air Depot, Agra, India. The dates are Oct. 13-15 and the city is San Antonio, Texas. For information ...

WALTER NEIDERT,
8300 Meadow Fire St.,
San Antonio, TX 78251

230th Med. Disp.

- Served with the 230th in Dinjan, India and Bhamo, Burma. Would like to hear from any of my comrades, if still around.

GERALD TORRANCE,
1510 Fairfield Rd.,
Westmoreland, TN 37186

Airdrome Squadrons?

- Our outfit sailed from Long Beach, California, on 8/3/43, as an airdrome squadron, scheduled for China. When we landed at Karachi on 9/18/43, after 45 days on the good ship Uruguay, we were told that all airdrome squadrons were disbanded, due to heavy losses. Our outfit was then broken up and sent to several bases in Upper Assam. After about seven months in the ATC at Sookerating, I was transferred to the 83rd Bomb Squadron, 12th Bomb Group, a B-25 outfit at Pandaveswar. I have never been able to find any information on airdrome squadrons, in China or anywhere else.

For those who have never heard of airdrome squadrons, here is a short run down. The purpose was to set up forward air strips to repair crippled aircraft on their return to their base. These forward bases were generally not too far behind enemy lines. The problem was, when the Chinese Infantry fell back, the base was a sitting duck and losses were heavy.

If anyone can tell me where I might find information on these units, it would be appreciated.

JACK C. LANGE,
1345 Nolan Ct.,
Mt. Zion, IL 62549

51st Fighter Control

- Served with the 51st in the CBI.

HOLLIS YOUNG,
500 Bradley Hill Rd.,
Blauvelt, NY 10913

EX-CBI ROUNDUP



BOB PETIT'S "MRS. VIRGINIA," a P-51A flown by the 1st Air Commandos. Photo by A. R. Van De Weghe.

Cape Neddick

- Would like to hear from anyone who went over on the Cape Neddick.

PARK W. CARTER,
PO Box 145,
Eureka, KS 67045

25th Fighter Sqdn.

- The June issue had an article written by Ray Gibson. A fine article but the words "Fighter Group" should have read "Fighter Squadron." The group was the 51st. I was a member of the 25th Fighter Squadron.

STANLEY A. STROUT,
28 Springhill Ct.,
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

Correction on Bridge

- In the June issue on page 30, the bridge was identified as the Yangtze Bridge. That bridge is the Salween River Suspension Bridge.

PAUL BARNUM,
1143 York Dr.,
Vista, CA 92084

22nd Bomb Group

- 22nd Bomb Squadron Association, China-Burma-India, will hold a reunion November 9-11, 2000, at the Holiday Inn-Gettysburg Battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. All members of the 22nd Bomb Squadron, their families and friends, and of the other three squadrons of the 341st Bomb Group: the 11th, 490th and 491st Bomb Squadrons are invited to attend. Contact...

DAVE HAYWARD,
6552 Crista Palma Drive,
Huntington Beach, CA
92647

14th AF Assn.

- The convention this year for the 14th will be held in Charleston, South Carolina. The dates are Oct. 11-15. Contact...

14th AIR FORCE ASSN.,
7731 S. Cove Cir.,
Littleton, CO 80122

Bridgebusters

- Just to point out a minor error in your excellent magazine. On page 21 of the 'May 2000 *Ex-CBI Roundup*, your caption for the B-25 Medium Bomber identifies its unit as the 409th Bridge Buster Squadron. That unit, the one in which my brother, Robert Alan Hansen served and died, was the 490th Bomber Squadron (Medium), with its nickname the Bridgebusters.

DALE W. HANSEN,
Apt. 10B,
315 West 70th St.,
New York NY 10023

58th Bomb Wing

- Went to the CBI with the 58th Bomb Wing, 20th Bomber Command.

JOSEPH E. PARSONS,
1295 College Drive,
Madisonville, KY 42431

ROUNDUP
is for ALL CBI Vets

A Short History 54th Air Service Group

By John P. Bondurant

The Headquarters & Headquarters Squadron, 54th Service Group (later to be designated 54th Air Service Group) was activated at the Greenville Army Flying School, Greenville, Mississippi, 3 July 1942, under authority of a letter, file 320.1, Headquarters Southeast Army Air Forces Training Center, 3 July 1942.

During 11-13 November 1942 the Squadron, then at cadre strength, moved to Dale Mabry Field, Tallahassee, Florida. Here the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron was joined in April 1943 by the 1575th and 1576th Ordnance Companies, MM (Avn) (Q), which were later designated Ordnance S & M Company (Avn), both at cadre strength, and the first group commander, Major Benjamin King, Air Corps, was assigned in June 1943.

These three units moved by motor convoy to Avon Park Bombing Range, Avon Park, Florida, on 18 June 1943. Here they were joined by the 499th and 500th Service Squadrons (later to be designated Air Service Squadrons) which had arrived by motor convoy from MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida, on 17 June 1943; by the 2118th and 2119th Quartermaster Truck Companies (Avn) (colored) which arrived by rail from the Ten Mile Station, Charleston, South Carolina, on or about 25 June 1943; and by the 1112th Signal Company (Avn) which arrived by rail from Columbia Army Air Base, Columbia, South Carolina, on 10 August 1943.

The training of an Air Service Group is based upon three phases: Phase I in which each unit is formed, filled with personnel, and the individual training of the soldier is completed; Phase II in which the units are brought together at one station, as a group, and the training and equipping of the group is performed under the guidance of a "par-

ent" Air Service Group; Phase III in which the group simulates the performance of its mission with tactical groups, under theater of operations conditions.

The units arriving at Avon Park were, for the most part, too far understrength to have completed their first phase of training at their previous stations; and this same shortage of personnel made impossible the completion of second-phase training at Avon Park. Filler personnel were arriving, if slowly, and officers and men made the most of the situation that confronted them, under the general guidance of the "parent organization," the 40th Air Service Group.

Who, of the original personnel, will ever forget Avon Park - the tent camp in its open bivouac area, flooded by torrential afternoon showers; the swarms of mosquitoes that drove the men to bed, under mosquito nets, at dark; the shortage of vehicles - "walk" was the rule; the early morning "belt buckle" inspections; the daily officers' lectures by the commanding officer of the parent group; and those glorious Florida sunsets.

On 18 August 1943, the Group received its "warning orders." These orders directed preparation for overseas movement, and were authority for the requisitioning of equipment not then on hand.

On 6 September 1943, the Group moved by motor convoy from Avon Park to Lakeland Army Air Field, Lakeland, Florida, for a permanent change of station. The movement orders did not include the 2118th and 2119th QM Truck Companies (Avn) (colored) so these units were lost to the Group.

Just before departure from Avon Park, Major Benjamin King, Air Corps, was transferred from the Group and

was succeeded in command by Major James R. Allen, Air Corps. Shortly after arrival at Lakeland, the Group was augmented by the 2080th and 2081st QM Truck Companies (Avn) which moved by motor convoy from their previous station at Venice, Florida.

The Base at Lakeland was nice and the housing facilities for the Group were good. All units were in frame buildings – quite a treat to the boys who had been living in tents in the marshy field at Avon Park. The officers and men working in Group Headquarters were well situated, and quite prepared for the “brace” that occurred daily at 0810.

The Group now contained all of the units to which it was entitled, and it began “third phase” training. The various units of the Group, with the ex-

ception of the Quartermaster Truck Companies, were still far below strength. It became apparent that the 54th Air Service Group could hardly begin – much less, finish – its third phase of training. From the very beginning, the Group had been greatly handicapped in its training. With the Port of Embarkation only two months away, there was ample cause for contemplation – could the Group perform its overseas training? The Group thought so, and set out to prove it.

On 20 October 1943, Lt. Colonel Herbert M. West, Jr., Air Corps, was assigned to the Group, and assumed command vice Major James R. Allen, transferred. The “Port Call” was imminent now. Colonel West’s first order was one restricting all personnel to the limits of the Base, and a killing tempo



ORDERLY ROOM of the 54th Air Service Group. Photo by John Bondurant.

of training and preparation for overseas movement was begun. The day began in the darkness of early morning, with physical training; it ended late into the night after lectures, hikes and endless hours of packing and crating.

The inspectors came, the inspectors went - some said the Group could move to the Port on the scheduled date, but most said "No." Finally, the Inspector General and the POM Inspector arrived. The Group sold itself to these inspectors - the ones who really counted - and soon thereafter the "Port Call" was received. Neither the 1081st QM Company nor the 1112th Signal Company were included in the orders, so they were lost from the Group.

On 15 November 1943, midst the playing of Auld Lang Syne by the Base band, the Group loaded aboard two Atlantic Coast Line trains and departed for the Port of Embarkation. None will ever forget the mixed emotions of that hour - the feeling of pride and satisfaction that comes only to those who know that they are enroute to join the boys who are doing the fighting; but the equally strong emotion of leaving home and loved ones.

The first stop enroute to the "unknown destination" proved to be at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, where the two serials arrived after dark on a cold winter day.

The Operations Officer at Patrick Henry was efficient, and the Group was quickly unloaded and formed, amidst the barked instructions from the loud speakers of the public address system. The march from the train to the barracks was cold, but not long. Soon everyone was bedded down in heated frame barracks.

No one will forget the high cyclone fence that surrounded Patrick Henry - it was anything but inviting! Having passed through its portals, there was but one way out - by sea.

At Patrick Henry, the Group was joined by the 1104th Signal Company. The days, which followed, were hectic. It was learned that the Group, enroute



CHINESE STREETS were busy in 1944. Photo by John Bondurant.

to its final destination, would be "transhipped" several times and that a bare minimum of tonnage would be allowed for "TAT" equipment. This necessitated repacking some boxes and selecting others for shipment to the Los Angeles Port of Embarkation for shipment with the Groups' "OEL" equipment. This, and other final chores, were completed and the units of the Group entrained for the short one-way trip to Hampton Roads, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron embarking 22 November 1943 on the Liberty Ship CONRAD WEISER, after warming themselves on cups of hot coffee served by ladies of the American Red Cross.

The 499th Air Service Squadron and the 1081st QM Co. debarked at Casa Blanca, North Africa. The other units debarked at Oran, Algeria, near the sunken French warships whose superstructures rose from the waters of the harbor. HQ & HQ Squadron debarked 13 December 1943.

Rising above the hulks of the sunken French ships was the towering old fort of Santa Cruz, perched atop a mountain peak, which rose abruptly from the Old Harbor. The Group climbed aboard a convoy of 6 x 6 trucks and proceeded to Staging Area CP-2, a windswept and rain-soaked tent camp about 20 miles away, near the village of Fleurus. The Group arrived at the Staging Area well after

darkness had fallen. It was raining and cold. A muddy, rocky hilltop, studded with furred tents, was pointed out as the temporary home of the 54th Air Service Group. That was a bad night, and one which will be long remembered – but who will forget Oran anyway!

For the most part, the Group had no mission at Oran other than to keep itself in readiness to move onward on short notice. So this became a nice orientation period; the Maison du Colon, the Red Cross Clubs, the retreat ceremonies at Place Foche, the village of Fleurus with its vin rouge and those wonderful North African oranges – all of these recall pleasant memories. But those cold, rainy days, the utter absence of fuel for heating, the long "chow lines" standing in the rain three times a day waiting with empty mess kits outstretched, and that ice cold, salty water for bathing – these present the other side of the picture!

It has been said that the Group had no essential mission in North Africa, but certain parts of the Group were quite busy. For its entire five weeks in North Africa, the 2081st QM Truck Company was utilized to capacity in hauling cargo from warehouses to the docks, for quick shipment to the Allied forces then fighting in Italy; the 1576th Ordnance Company was maintaining all of the vehicles of the Staging Area; the Engineering and Air Corps Supply vehicles of the Staging Area; the Engineering and Air Corps Supply sections of both Air Service Squadrons were working at La Senia Air Base; and the Finance Section of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron was working with the Disbursing Officer in Oran, handling "invasion currency" for their first time.

During the staging period at CP-2, the 499th Air Service Squadron and the 1081st QM Company, both of which had landed at Casa Blanca, French Morocco, rejoined the Group. There was much joy when the 1081st QM Company boys rejoined the Group, as they had been detached from the Group at Lakeland and their return



SIGN PAINTER of the 54th ASG working on an alarm sign. Photo by John Bondurant.

was unexpected.

In January 1944, the Group continued its way toward its unknown destination. Some of the units embarked at Oran on 10 January 1944; others moved to Algiers by rail and embarked there on 24 January 1944.

All units arrived in Bombay, India, debarking during the month of February and entraining at Victoria Station for their ultimate destination. Enroute to its destination, the Group lost the 499th Air Service Squadron and the 1004th Signal Company (Avn), but on its arrival at its final station, Tezgaon, Bengal, India, it inherited two units that were already in operation there: the 89th Air Service Squadron, commanded by Major Wayne Ramsey, Air Corps, and the 1086th Signal Company (Avn), commanded by 1st Lt John D. Redmond, Signal Corps. Thus, in the last days of February 1944, the 54th Air Service Group arrived at the station from which it was expected to perform the mission for which it had been activated.

The facilities of the partially constructed Base at Tezgaon far exceeded the dream of even the most wildly optimistic. Instead of the tents and cold rainy weather at Oran, there were comfortable thatch-covered bamboo

bashas, and mild but invigorating dry weather (this description refers only to the winter, of course). And, instead of the dehydrated foods to which the Group had never been partial, there were fresh fruits and vegetables, with some fresh meat thrown in. Quite a treat! And, instead of the empty counters of the vandalized stores of North Africa, there was merchandise for sale in even the smallest and filthiest of Indian bazaars.

Operations in East Bengal and North Africa were vigorous in the spring of 1944, and the Group found itself to be the sole source of third echelon supply and maintenance of many combat units. Among these was the highly secret "Project 9" at Hailakandi-Lalaghat, commanded by Colonel Philip Cochran and later to be designated the 1st Air Commando Group.

On 10 February 1944, a detachment of approximately 200 officers and men were sent to Hailakandi to give direct support to "Project 9." This detachment remained with the Air Commandos from that date until the close of the mission of the Air Commandos in May 1944. Thus, the Detachment 54th Air Service Group helped to put into the air the planes and gliders that transported General Wingate's "Chindits" to the heart of Burma - far behind Japanese lines. This aerial invasion was made on the night of 5 March 1944.

But, the Japanese were not long in retaliating. They immediately crossed the Chindwin River in Burma in force at three points, and their spearheads began a drive designed to take Imphal and to drive northward and cut the Allied line of communications of Lt. General Stilwell's forces in North Burma at Dimapur and other points in the Asam Valley.

To forestall this very determined and almost successful drive, the Allied forces needed greatly augmented combat air support, and a quick redistribution of ground forces. The 12th Bomb Group (M) arrived at Tezgaon in April 1944 from its operation in Italy, and rendered combat support to the

ground forces; and the 64th Troop Carrier Group likewise had been rushed to India from Italy, arriving in March 1944. It was based at Fenny, India, and adjacent air fields, and assisted units of the Air Commandos and the 443rd Troop Carrier Group in redeploying and supplying the ground forces. Thus, the 54th Air Service Group found itself supporting the following combat units: 490th Bomb Squadron (M) at Kurmitola; 12th Bomb Group (M) at Tezgaon; 1st Air Commando Group at Hailakandi-Lalaghat; 64th Troop Carrier Group at Fenny; and 459th Fighter Squadron at Chittagong.

Built around a cadre of the well-trained and seasoned troops of two full units, the 89th Air Service Squadron and the 1086th Signal Company, the 54th Air Service Group began in an efficient manner to serve the combat units in the Air Service Center Area. Although the Group was designed, staffed and equipped for support of only two combat groups, it was successfully supplying and maintaining the equivalent of twice that number. The men of the Group underwent their "trial by fire" period, and became veterans within a very short period of time.

In June 1944, both the 12th Bomb Group (M) and 64th Troop Carrier Group moved from the Air Service Center Area, and the 7th Bomb Group (H) moved into Tezgaon from Pandaveswar. There, then began a mission never expected of a Bomb Group or of an Air Service Group. The 7th Bomb Group began airlifting drums of aviation gasoline to China for use of the 14th Air Force. This was a difficult mission, as improvised drums had to be hung on improvised bomb shackles in the bomb bays of the B-24 airplanes. But, the 7th Bomb Group undertook and fulfilled the mission to the full capacity of its personnel and equipment. The 54th Air Service Group provided the gasoline and all possible support for the mission.

In September 1944, Colonel Herbert M. West, Jr., Air Corps, returned to the

United States for a surgical operation, and Lt. Colonel Philip Wilson, Air Corps, executive officer, assumed command of the Group.

During October 1944, the 7th Bomb Group (H) ceased its mission of Humplift of aviation gasoline and moved back to Pandaveswar. The 12th Bomb Group moved into Fenny, within the Tezgaon Air Service Center Area, and the Air Transport Command moved into Kurmitola-Tezgaon to begin a big operation, flying gasoline to China in C-109 and C-54 airplanes. The 1st Combat Cargo Group had arrived from the United States in late August and occupied the base at Sylhet, India.

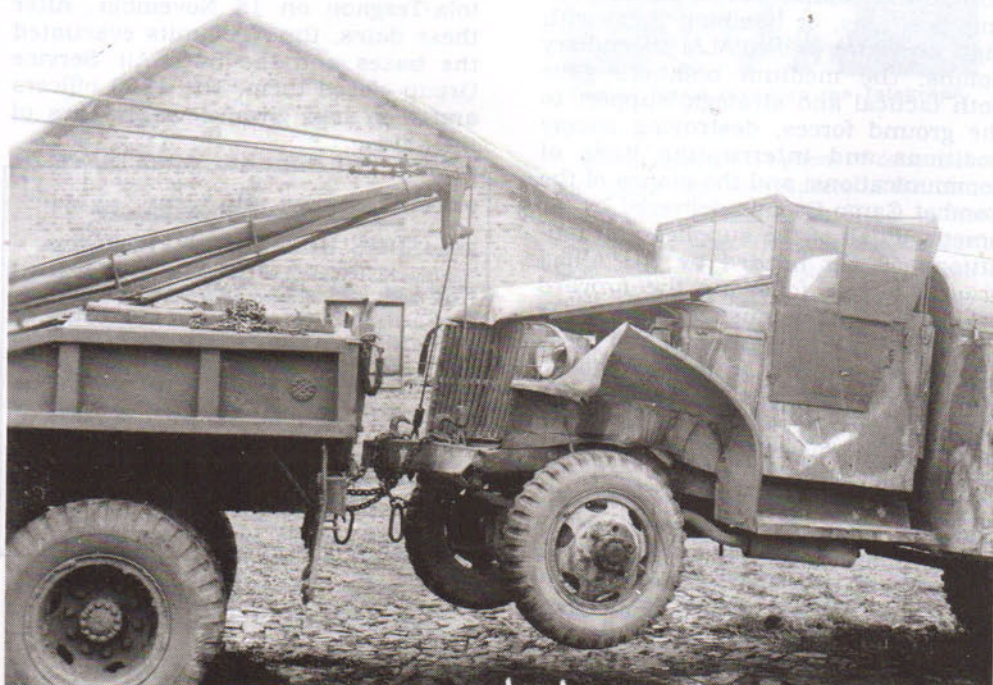
On 22 November 1944, Col. Douglas Johnston, AC, assumed command of the Group. A few days later, the 4th Combat Cargo Group arrived from the United States and occupied the base at Sylhet; and the 1st Combat Cargo Group moved into the Imphal Area.

At this time, the 54th Air Service

Group was servicing the following operational units: Air Transport Command at Kurmitola-Tezgaon; 1st Combat Cargo Group, Imphal; 4th Combat Cargo Group, Sylhet; 12th Bomb Group (M), Fenny; and 459th Fighter Squadron, Chittagong.

Late in November 1944, the 61st Air Service Group arrived from the United States and occupied its new Air Service Center at Shamsheernagar; then in late January 1945 the 382d Air Service Group (Sp) arrived from the United States, was attached to the 54th Air Service Group, and moved into the base at Chittagong.

Everything was now set for the final big push to drive the Japanese from Burma. The 12th Bomb Group (M) remained at Fenny; the 459th Fighter Squadron was moved southward from Chittagong to Rumkhapalong; the 4th Combat Cargo Group was moved from Agartala to Chittagong; the 1st Combat Cargo Group was moved from China to Hathazari and Doharzari; Fighter



AT KURMITOLA, INDIA, a wrecked truck of the 54th is being hauled. Photo by John Bondurant.

Squadrons of the 1st Air Commando Group and the 2d Air Commando Group were moved into the fields of Hay and Cox's Bazaar respectively. All of this air power was being massed in the Arakan area of Southeast India.

To assure coordination of supply and maintenance efforts of Air Service Command troops, Colonel Douglas Johnston, commanding officer of the 54th Air Service Group, was appointed Field Representative to the Commanding General, India-Burma Air Service Command. This appointment, in effect, made the 54th Air Service Group the keystone of supply and maintenance activities in support of all combat units operating in East Bengal and the Arakan areas during the period 29 January and April 1945. The combined efforts of all three Air Service Groups in East Bengal and the Arakan made possible maximum combat and air-supply operations of the air-arm of the Army Air Forces units listed.

The fighter aircraft gave close support to the ground forces, strafing enemy positions, or bombing them with high explosive or NAPALM incendiary bombs; the medium bombers gave both tactical and strategic support to the ground forces, destroying enemy positions and interrupting lines of communications; and the planes of the Combat Cargo Groups delivered by air practically all of the supplies and munitions of war needed by the Allied ground forces, following the forward echelons as they pushed southward and eastward in the Arakan, and those driving southward from Shwebo to Mandalay to Rangoon. The success of this combined operation is already recorded in the history of military operations in India-Burma.

The combat operations in Burma had now diminished, as Mandalay fell to the Allies in March 1945 and the liberation of Rangoon followed in May 1945. The 54th Air Service Group then concentrated on its final big mission of the war - the supply of munitions of war to the Allied forces in China.

This supply mission involved primarily the shipment of aviation gaso-

line and motor fuel, but included also considerable tonnages of Air Corps supplies, Ordnance ammunition and bombs, Quartermaster supplies, etc. Because of irregular incoming shipments and quick changes in the air-lift demands of the Air Transport Command, this supply mission was a most difficult one. At times, the accumulation of as many as 6,300 drums of gasoline were received by rail, unloaded and placed in revetments in one day.

With the passing of VJ Day, there was a lull in supply operations, but as soon as the Theater Staff ascertained the continued needs of the Allied Forces in China, the mission continued on a reduced scale.

On 14 September 1945, Col. Warren H. Higgins, AC, assumed command of the Group, vice Col. Douglas Johnston, AC, transferred.

This was the situation in late September 1945. The Air Transport Command completed its missions at Shamsheeragar on 15 October, at Kurmitola-Tezgaon on 15 November. After these dates, the ATC units evacuated the bases and the 54th Air Service Group closed them. The 1200 officers and men had given several years of their lives.



SHIPS' HISTORIES & PHOTOS

We have HISTORIES of all U.S. Naval, Army Transports, Coast Guard, WW II Merchant Ships. Partial up-to-date crew listing available. Printed on parchment paper, suitable for framing. HISTORY \$12.00. PHOTOS (8x10) \$14.00 (11x14) \$24.00 B/W. Please add \$3.50 S/H. Ask about our COLOR PHOTOS and our CUSTOM-MADE U.S. MILITARY CAPS. (Your choice of color, insignia, and ship silhouette.) Money back guarantee.

To ORDER call 1-800-SEAWEEED, or mail order to SEAWEEED'S Ships HISTORIES, P.O.Box 154, SISTERSVILLE, WV 26175

VISA • Mastercard • American Express

Visit our website www.uss-seaweed.com

**Please Notify
Us of Any
Address Change!**

As an Aviation Cadet . . . Why Were We Required to Learn the MORSE CODE?

Editor's Note:

As an airman in training I was required to learn the Morse Code. We did not have to know how to send it, but only to read it as we heard it. Can't imagine why, as probably none of us were ever to use it later in our military life.



Samuel Morse Invented the Telegraph.

A	B	C	D	E	F
G	H	I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X
Y	Z	NUMERALS			
1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	0	PUNCTUATION AND OTHER SIGNS	
Period	Comma	Interrogation	Colon	Semicolon	Quotation Marks
S O S	Start	Wait	End of Message	Understand	Error

The International Morse Code

Morse Code is a system of dots, dashes, and spaces, that telegraphers in the United States and Canada once used to send messages by wire. The code was named for Samuel Morse, who patented the telegraph in 1840. The letters that occur most frequently in our language are represented by the simplest symbols.

The dot is made by quickly pressing and releasing the key of the telegraph sender. This produces a rapid *click-clack* sound in the receiver at the other end. A short dash is twice as long as a dot. A long dash, as for the capital letter T, is equal to four dots. The space between the dots and dashes that make up a letter is the same length as a dot. The space between the letters of a word is equal to three dots. A space which is part of a letter combination is equal to two dots.

For years, all telegraph messages and most news were transmitted by Morse Code.



PREPARING FOR A CHINESE FUNERAL. Photo by Syd Greenberg.

About Jinx

• I often see Jinx Falkenberg referred to in the Roundup. Although she was an actress, I have never heard of or seen anything she played in! What is her motion picture history, and did she continue her career after the war?

I had the pleasure of seeing her in A3 (Kwang-han) when she performed with Pat O'Brien's troupe. After the performance I sat with Pat and was entertained wonderfully, but I did keep an eye on

Jinx who was taking turns playing ping-pong with some lucky GIs. She was wearing loose clothing, and the result was "devastating!"

BILL KITTREDGE,
1034 Bay Ave.,
Ocean City, NJ 08226

CBI-SAW (Radar)

• Reunion of the CBI-SAW will be in October. The location is Saint Louis. For information ...

WARREN SHEPHERD,
15327 Sullivan Ave.,
San Leandro, CA 94579

DO YOU HAVE A D.F.C.?

call or write us for further information
**THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING
CROSS SOCIETY**

6920 Miramar Road (Suite 207-D)

San Diego, CA 92121-2642

Tel. (858) 693-1950 Fax. (858) 693-1882

Visit our Website WWW.dfcsociety.org

Japanese Invasion Preparations

• I was a pilot with the 11th Combat Cargo Sqdn during most of 1945 and I was one of the many that were told there'd be no one going home 'til we hit Japan. We all know the BOMB ended that problem for us ... but I'm wondering about what we would have faced ... factually, if we actually invaded their homeland.

Do you, or anyone, know ... if there is video tapes or books that detail the level of Japanese preparations for our assaults? I already have several of both but none give any information on fortifications, troops, intelligence and so forth. I'd appreciate any info that I might act on in this regard.

I usually read the Roundup from cover to cover as soon as we receive it ... then my wife does the same ... and then I pass it to other vets that served in other areas of the war. MOST of them are amazed at the way we had this quiet little war of our own ... unnoticed.

WARREN THORNLEY,
7225 Oxford Circle,
Fox Lake, IL 60020-1037

9th Combat Cargo

• Was a photographer with the 9th Combat Cargo.

JULIUS LANG,
1011 Gembler Rd.,
San Antonio, TX 78219

Tell Your CBI
Friends About
Ex-CBI Roundup!

EX-CBI ROUNDUP

WW II Commemorative Medals



50th Anniversary of WWII

Bears the Official Seal of the
Department of Defense WWII
50th Anniversary Committee.

Item # CBI-006

China-Burma-India

Bears the Official Seal of the
Department of Defense WWII
50th Anniversary Committee.

Item # CBI-018

China Commemorative

Originally awarded to US troops that
served in China during WWII

Item # CBI-014

Each comes cased with ribbon bar

regularly ~~\$29.95~~

With this AD

Only \$26.95 each

plus S&H

S&H Fees:

\$1-\$50 \$5.75

\$51-\$100 \$7.75

\$101-\$200 .. \$9.75



www.PIECESOFHISTORY.com

To Order:

call

480-488-1377

M-F 9am-5pm, Arizona time!

fax: 480-488-1316

24 hrs.

or mail to

Pieces of History

P.O. Box 7590

Cave Creek, AZ 85327

Certified Military Medals Manufacturer

Get all your replacement medals!



ELEPHANTS AND MAHOUTS

By George H. Bonnette

The section from Parabatipur to Lalmanirhat was the toughest part of the entire project. Apart from the dependence on the railway, the section from Parabatipur to the Tista River was also dependent on elephants for pulling wire and other details. A more detailed account of their operation will not be amiss for the record. Previously we had only lightly touched on them.

The elephants are powerful creatures and when well trained, will respond to orders in their slow and steady manner, without much sign of temperament. However, humorous as it may sound, they are also delicate creatures. They could not be worked when they had sores on their bodies, reddened eyes, or seemed to have other complaints interpreted by the mahouts and which we could not dispute. Yet leeches could not stop them. The leeches fed until full and then dropped off, while the animals went along with their work.

The pachyderms fed mainly on a cheap grade of rice, known as paddy, but it amounted to 20 seers a day or 40 pounds and cost five rupees alone. This rice was varied only with some bananas and green feed. They were hired from local zamindars, or large landowners, at 10 rupees per day to include food.

Two different contracts were made with zamindars on the way up from Parabatipur as it was not feasible to take them too far from home. The last and longest deal was made with the Rajah of Rangpur for two elephants by 1st Lt. Henry H. Cooper, who was in charge of this section. The rajah graciously donated the services of his elephants as "baksheesh," but Lt. Cooper had to provide food and two rupees per day for the mahouts when they worked. It was necessary to contract for two elephants at all times to insure

that at least one would show up for work.

An elephant came with a mahout, or native operator, who was in a class of aristocracy all by himself. He knew more tricks for side graft and gold-bricking than a politician. First he had to be watched lest he divert the elephant's rice to the black market and starve the creature. Then he seemed to have some side rackets like hauling grass or feed during his free time making as much as 10 rupees per day, so that he was always looking for some excuse to take off for home or a village. This may also account for the so-called delicacy of the animals. It was necessary to make constant appeals to the Rajah to keep them on the job.

But came a Hindu holy day during which the elephants played an important part in the festival by way of gaudy trappings and processions, then nothing could stop them from taking off for four days. They were seldom at the job on time. They would be an hour or two late, and it was even necessary to send to the village to call them a few times. For a while they were quartered at Shampur with our rice contractor, until the work progressed closer to Rangpur, their home.

At Rangpur, the private rice contractor was unnecessary, but the Rajah was reimbursed for the food. While the Rajah's elephants were supposed to have once gone on a rampage, our men experienced no trouble with them on this score, but found them docile and well behaved.

With all these headaches, their help was still indispensable, particularly in the deep swamp areas. They could move through up to their bellies in water in total disregard of leeches. Men had to be called off the job when bitten by leeches lest the filthy water infect the sores. As the existing pipeline cir-



MANY WORKING ELEPHANTS used in the CBI.

cuit used the center pins, 5 and 6, two running boards were used with four wires each for each side of the crossarm. The bowlines to the running boards were tied to an improvised harness on the beasts. When only one was working, the bowline had to be passed around each pole and both lines thrown over the crossarms. They were halted without any trouble at each pole.

In addition, where the water was particularly deep, they would carry on their backs a few linemen at a time to each pole and then take them off. Also, where the poles were low enough, the placing of insulators on the pins and the tying in could be done while standing on their backs. One man rode the back with the mahout at all times. The commands given were simple enough and quickly learned. In the end, the soldier could give the order directly to the animal instead of to the mahout.

Expressions used were as follows: "peachay" for "back up," "moe" for "get

down," "ostay" for "slow," and "teek hai jow" for "go ahead." The elephant could pull a few miles of wire in one day. But, all factors considering on this section, some days only 20 to 30 spans were done. Elephants are not now recommended as part of T/E for construction companies, nor mahouts as part of T/O.

Why Not
Give Your
Buddy
a Subscription
to
Roundup?

Six Days in the Wei River Valley

By Claude E. Kendall

Top Gunner Claude Kendall, sitting in a C-47 being flown back to his advance base in Kwanghan, China, had his mind crammed with the events of the last seven days.

The series of incidents which lead to the last six incredible days started in April 1944 when Lee Baker and his B-29 crew arrived at their air base near Charra, India.

The four-engine B-29, the largest bomber in World War II, carried a crew of ten and its pilot. There were four gunners, a bombardier, a navigator, a flight engineer, a radio operator, a radar operator and a co-pilot. The first assignment for Lee Baker and his crew was to load their B-29 with gas and bombs and ferry them over the Hump (the Himalayan Mountains) to their advance base in China.

These B-29s were the new big bombers and were of high interest to our allied nations. So much a curiosity to a British Spitfire pilot that he placed himself in a life-threatening situation. Out of natural curiosity, he began observing the B-29 formation on one of Baker's ferrying missions over the Himalayan Mountains. After flying parallel to the formation at a distance for several minutes, he peeled off to go below the B-29s. One of the gunners in the plane on Baker's right wing, being uncertain of the plane's identity, fired a burst from his guns as the British fighter plane passed below him. Later it was learned the pilot of the Spitfire was the commander of a small British Air Base in the remote area of northern India. The gunner had shot out his hydraulic system on the fighter, and the British officer had to belly land his aircraft since he could not lower his landing gear.

In June of 1944, Baker's crew participated in a successful raid on Yawata, Japan. This mission was the first American aircraft to strike the Japanese mainland since the famous raid

lead by General Jimmy Doolittle in 1942. After several bombing missions under their belts, the crew was ardently ready for any assignment.

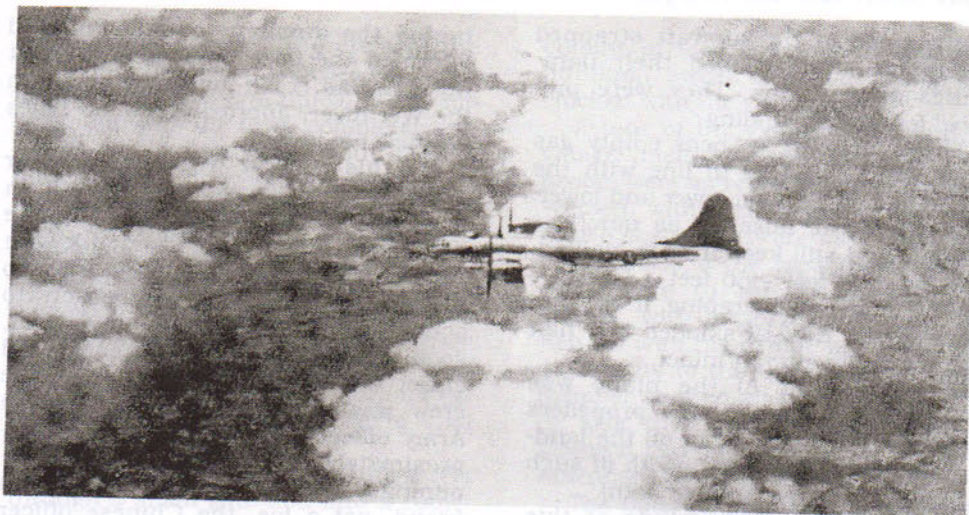
On September 8, 1944, the flight plan for the 444th Bomb Group and Baker's crew was to bomb primary targets in Ashan, Manchuria. The B-29 issued to the crew for this mission was, according to pilot Baker, was the second B-29 off the assembly line at the Boeing plant in the state of Washington. This olive drab "old No. 212" carried 500-pound bombs and two extra tanks of gas in its bomb bay.

Preflight checks were completed, and No. 212, together with some 30 other B-29s lifted off from Kwanghan, China, in the early dawn hours for Anshan.

As they approached the target, the gunners and bombardier kept a sharp lookout for enemy fighter planes. So far none had been spotted and the flight had been uneventful, what was considered a "milk run." Until - the silence was suddenly broken by the excited remarks from the tail gunner, Ed Winkleman, "Here he comes! He's low at 6 o'clock."

Then the next sound was the chatter of the twin 50 caliber machine guns and the "pom, pom" of his 20 millimeter cannon. Top Gunner Kendall swiveled around in his seat just in time to see the big red balls painted on the underside of the wings as the Jap Zero came up over the tail and passed over the top of the B-29. The Zero was trailing smoke and the crew watched as it spiraled over the plane then down to the ground where it exploded. The Japanese Zero fighter was confirmed as being destroyed, with the credit going to tailgunner Winkleman.

Approximately ten minutes later they were over their target at 24,000 feet. Bombardier Jerry Eigenberger got the target centered in his bombsight and the controls of the plane were



turned over to him. Seconds later over the intercom came the message, "Bombs Away!" "Looks good, let's get the hell out of here," said Baker as he put the B-29 into a steep bank and they headed for home, flying through light flak.

They experienced no further contact with enemy aircraft, but about halfway to the home base, Flight Engineer Sullivan called to Baker on the intercom, "Gas low in the wing tanks and the transfer pump not working." Baker replied, "For Gods sake, keep working on it." Shortly, Sullivan repeated, "no luck, can't get the damn pump to work." "Sully," Baker called, "Get your oxygen mask and get out into the bomb bay and check that pump." Sully donned his oxygen equipment and climbed into the bomb bay and worked on the transfer pump, but to no avail. The gas would not transfer.

Back at his position in the aircraft, Sullivan determined there was about 15 minutes of gas left to keep the aircraft aloft. When Sully gave this information to the pilot, Baker came on the intercom appraising the crew of the situation. He stated, "Looks like we will have to abandon ship, get your parachutes on and be ready to bail out."

Parachutes were strapped on and emergency kits checked. Baker descended the aircraft to 5,000 feet altitude in preparation to parachuting,

when Bob Paisley, co-pilot, sighted a partially dry riverbed among the trees and rough terrain. Baker and Paisley discussed the possibility of landing and what they would encounter. Their conclusion was to go for it.

This time Baker talked with each crewmember individually on the intercom and gave them a choice of bailing out or riding the aircraft down. No one chose to parachute into the partially wooded unknown territory. They all knew they were close to the Japanese lines and besides, none of them had ever parachuted before.

The two tanks of gas in the bomb bay presented a hazard in the landing, so they had to be jettisoned. Paisley opened the bomb bay doors, and Eigenberger went into the bomb bay and released them causing them to fall clear of the aircraft to the ground below. He returned to his position just in time to quickly prepare himself for the crash landing.

The landing gear was not lowered because they assumed the riverbed would be rough and muddy. It would have to be a belly landing.

The crew in the rear braced themselves on the bulkhead behind the radio and radar room after the side gunner, Nick Esposito released the rear hatch door. This would prevent the jamming of the hatch door upon landing and restricting their escape. Those

in the nose of the aircraft strapped themselves in and used their parachutes as cushions. They were prepared for a crash landing.

The B-29 with its near empty gas tanks swung around in line with the riverbanks and settled lower and lower. Baker kept the nose up as much as possible and still keep it from stalling. One hundred feet - 50 feet - 10 feet - then, grinding and scraping, it slid into the riverbed. No 212 skidded to a halt with the entire aircraft intact.

The underside of the plane was dented and scratched. The propellers were bent back and all in all the landing had been relatively smooth (if such a landing could be called smooth).

Uppermost in their minds at this point was to get out of the aircraft because of the possibility of it exploding. Kendall was first at the rear hatch. Part way through the hatch he hesitated because he couldn't swim. His hesitation soon ended with a yell, "get the hell out of here" from T. J. Woods as he gave Kendall a strong push. To his relief, Kendall landed in water only ankle deep. His elation was shared by Chester Downs, the radar operator, who also couldn't swim.

At the same time, in front of the aircraft, Baker opened the hatch above the pilot's seat and started to climb out. Halfway through he got stuck. In the excitement, he had forgotten to take off his parachute. Paisley and Eigenberger pulled him back inside, took off the parachute and in seconds all had scrambled out of the plane. The navigator, Ray Palmer, had a slight cut on his arm in the landing. Miraculously, other than that, no one was even scratched.

The entire crew watched from a distance to see if there was any danger from fire or explosion. After a few minutes, it was apparent their fears were groundless, so the next plan of action was to get the radio equipment and radio their position to their home base. This was a risk because they were close to the Japanese lines, but there was no alternative. Radio Operator Aubrey McCown and Eigenberger ac-

tuated the auxiliary power unit and informed the base at Kwanghan that No. 212 had crash-landed, gear up in the Wei River, approximately 60 miles northeast of Hsian.

By this time it was around four o'clock in the afternoon and within an hour people began to emerge from the undergrowth along the riverbank with the utmost of caution. A hand wave to them would cause each person to scurry back into the bushes. But, soon, they reappeared and converged closer - still cautiously. Shortly, the crew was approached by a Chinese Army officer with a contingent of approximately 100 soldiers. After determining that the American crew was a friend, not a foe, the Chinese officer accompanied Baker and Paisley to the nearest village to confer with one of its leading citizens who was a Catholic bishop.

Meanwhile, the Chinese soldiers carrying grass, branches and other camouflage materials swarmed over No. 212. She soon was completely covered and barely visible from the air. Being near the Japanese lines, they feared the plane would be spotted from the air and bombed.

The sun dropped below the horizon and the rest of the crew prepared to bed down for the night on the riverbed. After an exhausting day, they had no problem falling asleep in the cold night air. The Chinese soldiers kept watch over the Americans that night. Top Gunner Kendall felt one of the soldiers place a sheepskin coat over him, as he lay half asleep.

The second day, the crew awoke to bright sunlight and a breakfast of K-rations, which tasted good to the hungry crewmembers. Despite being much-maligned, K-rations tasted pretty good if the person is hungry enough. Baker and Paisley had returned from the village and had made arrangements to transport the entire crew into the village.

The crew was loaded into two-wheeled carts pulled by huge curly-horned oxen. The road was a deep-rutted path that led over the nearby

hill. As they reached the crest of the hill, what they saw appeared to be a picture from medieval times. At the top of the hill was the town completely enclosed with a high wall about six feet thick. The entrance was marked by two mammoth wooden doors easily 20 feet high, which swung open and they entered the enclosure.

Inside the town they were lead down narrow streets with little open shops on both sides of the street. The street was lined with Chinese who stared with friendly, but obvious, curious expressions since most of them had never seen an American.

The procession turned off the street through a small gate and into a courtyard. This was the home of the Catholic priest who greeted them and was to be their host for the next several days. The priest spoke Chinese and Latin, which he had learned during his studies in the Western World. Downs and Eigenberger knew some Latin from their high school courses, and thus they established a means of communication - Chinese to Latin - Latin to English. Though primitive, they were able to communicate by this means.

Each person was given a small room overlooking the courtyard. The room was furnished with a small bed, sheets, down pillow, a ceramic water pitcher and bowl. Such comforts they hadn't experienced since arriving in India.

Meals were served in a huge dining room with linen tablecloths, china, silver and crystal. An abundance of wine was served with every meal. The priest apparently had a well-stocked wine cellar, for each meal included a round of toasting whatever came to mind. In fact, at one sitting, M/Sgt. Sully repeated the Gettysburg address, with a toast for every phrase.

Although the food for the average Chinese was meager fare, they furnished the Americans with the best food they had. Fresh eggs were a delicious treat, as well as other fresh foods such as milk, vegetables and fruits which the crew hadn't seen for a long time. They were also served a Chinese

cuisine of bird egg soup, lotus plant pudding, sweet and sour pork, and chicken with the staple rice.

A tour of the village shops and the village itself was an experience. The people were as remarkable as the area. Women, with their bound feet in their native costumes, were as much a cultural shock to the crew as the Americans were to the Chinese people. Downs, with his bright red hair, and Kendall with his blonde hair were quite a curiosity to the natives. If any crewmember showed an interest in an item for sale, the Chinese people would examine it carefully, wondering what the Americans found so interesting.

The tallest building in the town was a stone tower. Inside the tower squatted a 10-foot figure of Buddha overlooking the town. Although the Catholic priest was a missionary for Christianity, it was apparent that most of the Chinese people still worshipped their ancient Buddha.

The American crew, who were predominantly young men just out of high school, were all treated as heroes, but the one most sought after was Winkleman, to tell how he had shot down the Japanese Zero fighter plane. The next day, the crew was taken to the children's school, located near the outskirts of the village. All the children of the school were brought out into the open courtyard to see the American airmen. Winkleman described how he had destroyed the Japanese aircraft. Although they did not understand one word of English, the children clapped loudly as they listened to his story, which was told mostly in gestures.

The Chinese people in the area apparently wanted their children to meet and see the Americans. That afternoon, the crew was asked to meet in the central courtyard. There assembled was a large group of school children who had walked with their teachers from a neighboring village. They brought with them gifts of fruit for the crew.

A Chinese Army colonel arrived, who was assigned to a nearby Chinese Army contingent. He spoke fluent Eng-

lish, and thus greatly improved the communications between all the parties involved. He was to make the arrangements to eventually transport the crew to the city of Hsian.

The colonel's commanding officer was a general in the Chinese Army who was an avid basketball player. The general challenged the Americans to a basketball game. The arrangements were quickly made, and the next day the general and his team arrived. There was an outdoor basketball court with a hard dirt surface located just outside of the entrance of the local school. The Americans had a definite height advantage, but the Chinese team had been playing together for quite some time. It soon became apparent that their strategy was "Pass to the general and he shoots." The game was fairly close, but in the end, the Americans felt that good relations would be upheld if the Chinese team was the victor.

The time had come to say goodbye to the Catholic priest. He presented each member of the crew with a St. Christopher medal - to protect them in their travels. The only gift the Americans could offer in return was a silk parachute, but the priest graciously declined.

In the meantime, hundreds of "coolies" had been recruited to build a four-mile long road from the downed aircraft to the nearest railroad. The road was used to transfer salvaged parts and equipment from No. 212 to the railroad and eventually to the American air base. Ninety percent of the aircraft was salvaged, leaving only the shell of the plane sitting in the Wei River bed. The crew was transported over the newly constructed road to the railroad where a train awaited them. After a 60-mile ride, they arrived in the city of Hsian. The train station was teeming with people who wanted to get a glimpse of the American airmen, and especially Downs and his fiery red hair.

The crew was then driven to an English compound located within the city, where they were bedded down for the evening. The next day, the Chinese

officials of the city and the Chinese Army held a huge banquet in honor of the Americans. A ten-course dinner was served with numerous wine toasts. The crew for the most part did not know what the cuisine consisted of, but they all agreed that most of it was quite tasty.

That evening, shortly after their return to the English compound, they were awakened by a loud siren - Air Raid. They ran across the lawn to the edge of the street and down a few steps into a small dugout bomb shelter in front of the compound.

The Japanese lines were only 50 miles from Hsian and they were bombing the city in the night with small anti-personnel bombs. Esposito yelled, "Look!! There is a bonfire at the end of the street." "Where?" said Baker, as he went up a few steps of the stairs to look. Just then a small bomb exploded outside the entrance to the bomb shelter. The concussion blew Baker's hat off and that was enough to make him lose interest in seeing the bonfire.

Later they were told that the Japanese had many spies in the city of Hsian, and that the bonfire probably was a marker to indicate the location of the Americans.

The next day, the entire crew was taken out to the nearby airfield. There awaiting them was a C-47 transport plane. They were soon on their way back to Kwanghan reminiscing about their experiences over the last six days - and touched by the warm Chinese hospitality they had discovered in the midst of war.

EX-CBI Roundup is for ALL CBI Veterans!

EX-CBI ROUNDUP



CBI SWIM MEET "ENGLAND VS USA"

I served as Personal Pilot to General Frank Merrill from 1944 through 1945. Co-Pilot was Cliff Knight, who now resides in Salt Lake City. We made many flights (all DC-3) over the Hump to Chungking and Burma. We made one flight back to Washington, D.C., U.S.A., with the General and then back to New Delhi. The photo carries an interesting story:

We flew General Merrill to Agra, India, one day in January of 1945 for a swim meet, U.S.A. vs. England at Agra Swim Stadium. Enclosed photo shows presentation of Winner's Trophy U.S.A. to Team Captain "OSS Frogman" Ensign Tom Medlicott. (He was later severely injured in Burma in which he lost an eye at Underwater Demolition Assignment. He is now deceased.)

I opened my medical practice here in Hermosa Beach, California, in 1952. One of my first patients introduced himself to me as Tommy Medlicott, the local town plumber. He noticed a picture on my office wall of General Merrill and told me, "I have a photo you might be interested in." And, thus, I came into possession of the enclosed picture.

I do not know the names of the other CBI men in the photo. Some appear to be Navy Frogmen. I do not know the odds of Tom Medlicott meeting up with me in Hermosa Beach after all those years, but they must be considerable. Photo courtesy Gordon Johnston.



BASKET WEAVERS working on rigid baskets. Photo by George Bottoms.

Happened At Myitkyina

• One day my still cameraman and I were en route from Myitkyina to an assignment with the British 36th down the railway corridor. We were traveling in our jeep with rail wheels on the narrow gauge line, and had stopped and pulled onto a siding at Mogaung to get a break and a cup of tea from the station vendor. A jeep train was just making up; that was a jeep for locomotive pulling two flat cars loaded with supplies for the 36th. As often was the case, local people would hitch a ride on the jeep trains which passed through or near their villages along the rail corridor. This day, several women and a couple of young girls had hopped onto the end of a flat car to return from the Mogaung market to their village. As the jeep locomotive started to move

and take up the slack, the cars jerked and one of the young girls (about nine years old) lost her balance and fell down under the cars. Many saw and yelled for the jeep driver to stop, but I dove under the car and held the panicky girl down between the rails so she wouldn't get under the wheels. When the cars stopped, I got her out and found she had a broken arm, and the tips of two fingers smashed off between the wheel of the flat car and the rail.

My sidekick got me a couple of sturdy sticks for splints to support her arm, and my belt pack bandage covered her mangled fingers temporarily. With her worried mother trotting along I carried her to an army field hospital there at Mogaung.

When I returned to Myitkyina, I found there was a newly established hospital and surgery set

up to care for civilians, and my little friend was there, being looked after by her mother. When I looked in on them, I had some chewing gum for the youngster and got a big smile from her and her mother; neither spoke English, but I understood "thank you" in the local dialect. I found that word of that whole event had traveled to many villages, and when I appeared I got smiles, pats on the back, friendship with many locals, and cooperation. I was recognizable because at 6 feet, 4 inches height I was one of the tallest people, American or otherwise, in the whole country.

RICHARD H. SPENCER,
6152 N. Verde Trail,
E-116,
Boca Raton, FL 33433

Wrong Snake?

• Referring to your July issue . . . Anacondas are only found in the American Continents, so the snake referred to must be a Python. Both snakes are non-poisonous. Anacondas give birth to live young where Pythons lay eggs.

LOUIS PUSHKARSKY,
169 E. 7th,
Trenton, MO 64683

10th Weather Sqdn.

• Served with the 10th Weather Sqdn. in the CBI.
JAY L. ASHIN,
10374 Holman Ave.,
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Send Those Stories
and Photos to
Ex-CBI Roundup!

EX-CBI ROUNDUP

Return to the Ledo Road

By Armand Fontaine

Last October, my wife and I took a tour of Nepal and India. We made arrangements after the tour to go to Calcutta and fly on to Dibrugarh, the closest commercial airport to Ledo in Northern Assam.

Prior to departure, I made arrangements to be met at the Dibrugarh Airport by a guide and driver.

I had also written of our arrival to Mr. Joy Chowdhury, the manager of the Ledo tea estates, where I was stationed during World War II.

We arrived in Dibrugarh, which was an Air Force base during the war, at about 10:00 a.m. There were forms to fill out as Northern Assam is still a restricted area – but we forgot to get our passports stamped, which caused us to be detained by the police for about an hour the next day.

With our guide, Rajah Dowerah, we proceeded to Digboi, where the U. S. military cemetery was located. It is now a barren field as the bodies have been returned to the U.S.

We drove on to Tinsukia to the OCD Catholic Missionary Church we used to visit. It is still there, but locked. It looked deserted, but they tell me that they still have services on Sundays. This area is now covered with tea plantations, with women in cooley hats picking tea.

At Chabua, we visited the Commonwealth cemetery, which is beautifully maintained – very impressive!

Our guide had grown up in Chabua. His father had been an engineer at the oil refinery. We took a tour of the refinery, which looked pretty much the same. During the war, we ran a pipeline from Chabua up the narrow road – the sign "Burmah Shell" had disappeared.

We then proceeded to Margherita as the manager of the Ledo tea estates had not met us on arrival at Dibrugarh as he had written us. Our guide put us up at the Coal House – very simple accommodations, similar to what we had during the war. But, the employees



THIS IS THE LEDO BAZAAR AREA TODAY. Photo by Armand Fontaine.



OLD LEDO AIR STRIP still in use for private planes. Photo by Armand Fontaine.

were very nice and accommodating. They cooked us some outstanding meals. The dining area even had a television – local stations – no CNN.

From there we went to Ledo. The bazaar now has two streets and some two story buildings, but it's pretty much the same. But, across from the bazaar where Advance Section Three Headquarters had been are a row of two-story buildings housing the coal mining operations, which has greatly expanded.

The big change – from Ledo up the road for the next 30 or 40 miles are wall to wall houses (huts) – buildings and people.

There seems to be a military post every two or three miles up the road for the distance we covered. Our guide told us this goes on for another 30 or 40 miles.

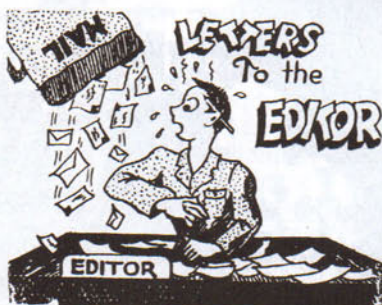
We returned to the Ledo tea estates. The area where our bases were located is now covered with tea plants – and expanded all the way to the main road. The corner where the Ledo plantation

road meets the Ledo main road, where the vehicle dump was, is now a small village.

Mr. Joy Chowdihury and his family were wonderful hosts. We learned the reason he had missed us at the airport was that one of his employees had been killed by a revolutionary the night before, so he had been with the military all day.

When we left, they gave us a large box of Assam tea.

Send Your





STILWELL CINEMA is about 20 miles from the road. Photo by Armand Fontaine.

WANT ADS

WANT ADS in Ex-CBI Roundup cost 20 cents a word, minimum \$4.00 (for 20 words or less) per insertion. Copy with payment must be received 10 days before first of month preceding month of issue.

HISTORIAN-CONSULTANT desires C.B.I. artifacts: uniforms, flight jackets, insignia, hats, photo-albums, C.B.I. made jewelry; will purchase any item. These for reunions, shows, evaluation, history discussions. Have 27 years experience, consulted to Smithsonian and Center for Intelligence, and donate to military museums. Lifetime member of J.F.K. Special Warfare Museum Association. Call collect today, 661-287-3248. Above statements can be verified. Robert Viau, 23951 Oakland Ct., Valencia, CA 91355.

10-00

CBI HISTORIAN, RESEARCHER GEORGE DIVELY, seeks stories, photos, memorabilia to accurately portray the CBI, and preserve your personal legacy. I've worked with museums, embassies, Cable-TV's History Channel and the Pentagon's 50th Anniversary of WW2 Committee, among others. My project's professional exhibits, research and educational events over these last

25 years, have helped thousands learn about "the forgotten theater." I'm dedicated, and will gladly compensate you. Write: Box 10743, Alexandria, VA 22310. Thanks.

11-00

HISTORIAN/RESEARCHER seeking CBI items. Preserving the Past - For the Future. Seeking to represent military history through Preservation and Educational Display. Very serious buyer for A-2 Leather Flight Jackets, Squadron Patches, Wings, Uniforms, Photos, Blood Chits, Insignia Medals, Anything CBI! No games - just serious buying. Please write PETE BENNETHUM, PO Box 6523, Wyomissing, PA 19610 or call (610) 678-1730.

5-01

Roundup Want Ads Get Results!

**Send Your
Roundup Renewal
Early!**

**Don't miss
your next copy!**

United States Postal Service

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title Ex - CBI Roundup		2. Publication Number 0 0 1 1 3 0 0 X		3. Filing Date Sept. 1, 2000
4. Issue Frequency Monthly except August & September		5. Number of Issues Published Annually 10		6. Annual Subscription Price \$ 17.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4) 1800 Park Newport # 203 Newport Beach, CA 92660				Contact Person Dwight O. King Telephone 949 - 759 3553
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer) 1800 Park Newport # 203 Newport Beach, CA 92660				
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank) Publisher (Name and complete mailing address) Dwight O. King 1800 Park Newport # 203 Newport Beach, CA 92660 Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Dwight O. King 1800 Park Newport # 203 Newport Beach, CA 92660 Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Dwight O. King 1800 Park Newport # 203 Newport Beach, CA 92660				
10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.) Full Name Complete Mailing Address NONE				
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None Full Name Complete Mailing Address NONE				
12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one) The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: <input type="checkbox"/> Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months <input type="checkbox"/> Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)				
13. Publication Title Ex - CBI Roundup		14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below July, 2000		
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months		No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		5247		5083
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation				
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)		0		0
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)		1467		1483
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution		0		0
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS		0		0
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b.(1), (2), (3), and (4))		1467		1483
d. Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, complimentary, and other free)				
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541		300		300
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541				
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS				
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		300		300
f. Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15d. and 15e.)		600		600
g. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c. and 15f.)		5247		5083
h. Copies not Distributed		0		0
i. Total (Sum of 15g. and h.)		5247		5083
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c. divided by 15g. times 100)		89		89
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership (15c. divided by 15g. times 100) <input type="checkbox"/> Publication required. Will be printed in the Oct. 2000 issue of this publication. <input type="checkbox"/> Publication not required.				
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Dwight O. King Sept. 1, 2000				

About Flying Tigers

• As usual your June publication is filled with great stories; however, the best one is written by Charles H. Older - Double Ace, Flying Tiger. (15 miles east of Rangoon.)

It reminded me of a great piece of Flying Tiger memorabilia I saw recently. Out FT claim to fame here is George Burgard (also a Double Ace). Most of us WW II vets knew him.

His mentor here in Sunbury, Pennsylvania was the editor of the local newspaper. As a "thank you" for all his help, George presented him with a copy of *The Flying Tigers* by Russell Whalen, dated October 1942 (just three months after disbandment) and put a personalized note on the title page and signed it; he also had 16 other Tigers autograph the same page! The book is now the property of the editor's son who allowed me to read it a few months ago. My crude calculation tells me that these 17 were credited with about 25% (75 planes) of the total Japanese planes shot down. This total was helped by the signature of Bob Neale (Triple Ace); "Bill" Reed (Double Ace); Charlie Bond, Dick Rossi and R. H. "Snuffy" Smith (all Aces) among the group.

J. ELLIS WOOD,
PO Box 421,
Shamokin Dam, PA
17876

Keep Those Letters
and Stories Coming!

EX-CBI ROUNDUP

How's your

CBI I.Q.?

by HUGH CRUMPLER
1943 AFS, British Indian Army
- 45 UP War Correspondent



What was "Task Force Aquila," the B-17 mission commanded by Col. Caleb V. Haynes?

Jim Shannon of Houston, sergeant/crew chief in CBI of Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell's China-based C-47, "Fujiyama Foo-Foo," reminded me of that almost-forgotten operation in a recent letter. Jim is a retired Delta Air Lines pilot. It was my series of columns tracking down the B-17s in CBI that prompted Jim's letter. Jim arrived in CBI as tail gunner on Col. Haynes' crew.

"Aquila" was one of a surprising number of almost-forgotten air force projects that were originally planned for CBI. Some of them went on to completion. Some, for various reasons, were scrapped or ended up in another theater. But all of them, in one way or another, made air combat history. And the CBI Theater - far from being "forgotten" - will always be remembered in the history of warfare for its unique role in the development of the air arm.

"Aquila's major contribution to CBI was that it was responsible for the arrival in CBI in 1942 of three of the great airmen of the war. They were:

Col. Caleb V. Haynes, fighter pilot, heavy bomber pilot, and transport pioneer of Trans-Atlantic air routes. Haynes was an early commander of the Hump airlift and was later Gen. Claire V. Chennault's bomber commander in the 14th Air Force.

Col. Merian C. Cooper, World War I fighter pilot, co-producer and writer of the classic movie, "King Kong," and later Chennault's first chief of staff.

Col. Robert Lee Scott, Jr., deputy to Haynes, executive officer of the Assam-Burma-China Ferry Command (early Hump airlift), 14th Air Force

fighter pilot and squadron commander, and author of "God Is My Co-Pilot" and a number of other best-selling war books.

All of them trained in the U.S. with "Aquila," and they came to CBI together, but none of them reached CBI with that top-secret project. Reason: "Aquila" was cancelled due to circumstances of the war.

Here is Colonel Scott's description of "Aquila" as reported in his book, *Flying Tiger: Chennault of China*, published in 1959 by Doubleday, Inc. Garden City, NY.

"The mission planned by Cooper would have been one of the greatest ever flown. Our task force was to have bombed Tokyo from the island of Mindanao (the Philippines) while Doolittle's B-25s leaped off the carrier *Hornet* and came from the sea. The only catch was that the Japs caught on and fields we were to use in eastern China were captured and the supplies destroyed. So, instead of bombing Tokyo, I was stranded in India."

Col. Haynes arrived in CBI with six B-17s and a number of C-47 support aircraft. With "Aquila" gone up in smoke, Gen. Lewis Brereton took over the B-17s for his Tenth Air Force. The men and officers of "Aquila" went on to fame in other CBI operations.

- CBI IQ -

Wasn't "HALPRO" another bomber operation scheduled for CBI that never arrived in the theater?

HALPRO, code name for a task force of 23 B-24D bombers, was originally slated for China, where the big bombers were scheduled to bomb Japanese targets from bases in China.

But, alas and alack for CBI - when the HALPRO detachment arrived in the Middle East in June 1942 it was put on "temporary" orders to remain in that theater. Supposedly, the "temporary" orders were for HALPRO to mount a one-time bombing mission against the Ploesti oil fields in Rumania on 12 June 1942.

But following Field Marshall Erwin Rommel's success in breaking through British defenses at Cyrenaica, Libya - threatening the entire Allied positions in North Africa - the men and aircraft

of HALPRO were permanently assigned to Gen. Lewis H. Brereton's Middle East Air Force. HALPRO was later absorbed by the Ninth Air Force.

HALPRO was named for Col. Harry A. Halverson. Some air observers judged that the HALPRO ferrying operation from Fort Myers, Florida, to the Middle East – without a single accident or loss – marked the maturity of the Ferrying Command.

The official Air Force history reported that HALPRO was "a prize example of a unit pulled hither and yon by the alarms and crises of early 1942."

"Aquila," "HALPRO" and the "Doolittle Raid" (destination CBI) were all self-liquidating projects in that no provisions were made for reinforcements or replacements.

- CBI IQ -



"I don't know if he can type, but he sure is a Crumpler!"

MORE GI UNIVERSITIES

Referring to the item on "Basha University" in the June 2000 column, Ernest Lander, Jr., 2177 Riggs Drive, Clemson, SC 29631, reminds me that "there were other American servicemen's 'universities' in India. I was personally involved with 'NASAC College' at Chabua in 1945, and 'Lackapoint University' in the old Hijli compound near Kharagpur in 1946. Books were furnished by USAFI in Calcutta and servicemen did the instructing." Thanks, Ernie. Any more institutes of higher learning?

- CBI IQ -

In the April 2000 column, I printed part of a letter from Capt. Robert Buse about his role in the Salween campaign. In the May 2000 column, I printed more of Captain Buse's letter but attributed it to another CBler. Here is the part of the letter that should have been attributed to Captain Buse:

"I participated in the Salween campaign as member of the liaison team with the Chinese army. I served with Capt. Vernon Anderson, three enlisted men: two for radio, myself: two interpreters and one houseboy, Wong. We lived off the land for this period of time and I still like basic Chinese food. I also spent some time teaching flame throwers at Kweiyang in April. I moved to Murchong for awhile, and then, by 'shank's mare' again to Ledo with the 263rd Regiment, teaching Thompson machine guns to the entire regiment. My last stop was the airfield in Kweilin when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, ending the war. I took a train ride across India during the 1943 famine. I flew the Hump on Thanksgiving Day, 1943, to begin my various duties in China."

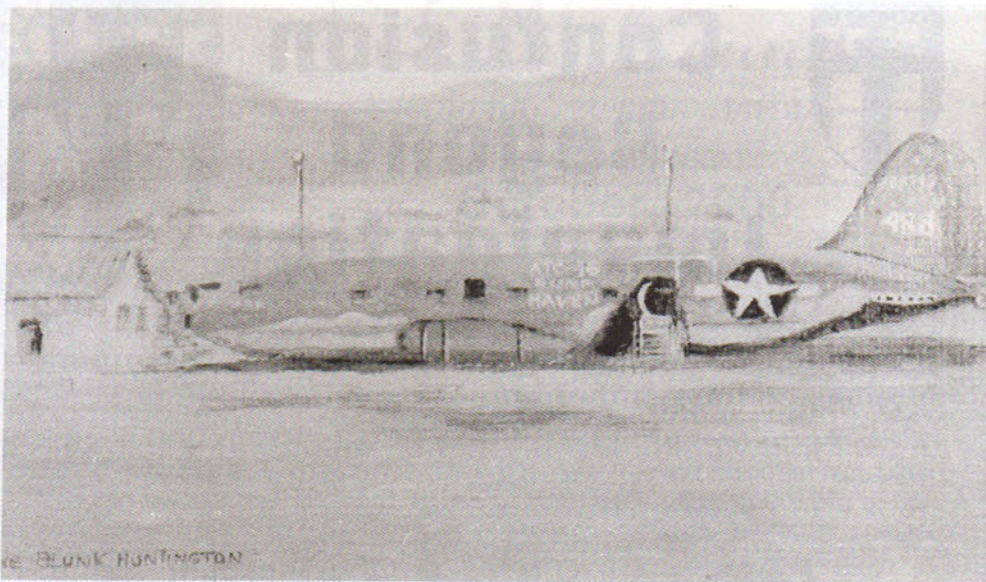
I apologize, Robert, for the splitting of your letter and for the misattribution. I cannot satisfactorily explain either error, and I hope this sets it straight for our readers. You certainly had an important and adventurous tour-of-duty in CBI. - Hugh.

Robert Buse's address is 307 Devon Way, Seneca, SC 29672.

- CBI IQ -

WIT AND WISDOM OF CBI

Sgt. Russell E. Prather, light plane pilot with the First Air Commandos, 94 years old, died on April 20, 2000. He was a flying angel to the many sick and wounded British Chindits and American airmen he flew out of Burma, in his jungle tree-top flying style. Russ Prather wrote "Easy Into Burma," serialized in the *Ex-CBI Roundup*, about his experiences in landing on strips-of-opportunity behind Jap lines and taking off with casualties while sometimes under enemy fire. **And, the roster of CBI survivors dwindles down to a precious few.**



Jane Blunk Huntington, noted Coronado, California artist, painted this acrylic of the "Eggus Shack," the famous snack bar at the Yunnanyi Air Base, China, that was housed in the fuselage of a wrecked C-46. Pilot Andrew B. Hart of the C-46 lost an engine while approaching Yunnanyi. He rode down the plane into a rice paddy less than a mile from the end of the runway. GI ingenuity took over from there and the result was the "Eggus Shack." Photo of painting by Joe Kelleher, 1111th Signal Co.

"K-rations . . . the regular, straightforward methods of taking them soon became unappetizing to us, and already we were carrying out experiments as complicated, in their field, as the recommendations of the Kama Sutra or the contorted copulations of the Black Temple at Puri. (I have seen a soldier mix the whole contents of his breakfast packet into his mess tin, and cook the lot together - coffee, powdered milk, fruit bar, compressed ham and egg. He left out the gum and toilet paper.)" - Brigadier John Masters of the 1944 Chindit action behind Jap lines in Burma. Quoted in his book, *The Road Past Mandalay*, published in 1961 by Harper & Brothers, New York.

* * *

I have always believed if the runways in China could have handled loaded B-17s we would have been over Tokyo with Doolittle." - Jim Shannon, Houston, TX, tailgunner on Col. Caleb V. Haynes' crew.

- CBI IQ -

Basha Blabber of First Air Commando Association reports in its mid-2000 edition that "only three CG4A gliders are left in existence." One is at the Air Force Museum, one at an un-stated location in France, and one at the Silent Wings Museum in Terrell, TX. The CG4A was the glider used by the First Air Commando in supporting the British "Chindit" invasion of Burma. The newsletter is edited by Bill Johnson, PO Box 1025, Fulton, TX 78358.

* * *

We had a great time on the SR2000 trip to Kunming but about the only thing recognizable there was the old control tower and runway." - Lee "Tiger" and Mary Lee Chalifour, 131 S.E. Colonial Street, Port Charlotte, FL 33952. Lee is president of the Burma Star Association USA and a veteran of the Army Air Corps and the American Field Service in Burma.

Copyright 2000 by Hugh A. Crumpler



Confusion Beyond Imagination



Now is the time to complete your collection – or even begin it – of William Boyd Sinclair's 10 volume recollection of China-Burma-India in World War II.

We are offering Books 3 - 10 in soft cover at a reduction of 15% off each book. Just order books you wish and deduct 15% and add postage. If you wish to order 6 or more, take another 5% off the total and we will pay the postage. (Books 1 and 2 are excluded.)

Full Sets are Offered at 25% Discount

Hardcover Reg. \$254.45 – less 25% – \$199.00

Softcover Reg. \$177.45 – less 25% – \$133.00

Sets include 2 maps and shipped prepaid

Book 3 – Pipe, Rails and Wire; Supply Salvage; Shortage and Surplus

\$16.00 less 15% – \$13.60

Book 4 – Vinegar Joe; More Brass Hats and One GI

\$18.00 less 15% – \$15.30

Book 5 – Medics and Nurses

\$17.00 less 15% – \$14.45

Book 6 – Police, Pleaders and Prisoners; Too Few for Too Many

\$16.50 less 15% – \$14.00

Book 7 – Under Wrap for Eyes Alone

\$20.50 less 15% – \$17.40

Book 8 – That Old Happy Morale

\$18.00 less 15% – \$15.30

Book 9 – Several Sides of CBI Life; More Aspects of CBI Life

\$17.50 less 15% – \$14.85

Book 10 – Allies and Merchant Wallahs; The Army's Animal Kingdom; With Duty Done. \$19.50 less 15% – \$16.55

Add \$3.00 postage for one book. Add \$2.00 each additional book.

Five or more books shipped prepaid.

Free Brochures available – Satisfaction Guaranteed



JOE F. WHITLEY, Publisher

Pauline Whitley Adams, Manager

3729 Canyon Dr., Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

(208) 664-2329